

**Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection**

**Division of Marketing**

**Agricultural Development & Diversification Program (ADD)**

**1998 Grant Project Final Report**

Contract Number: 13076

Grant Project Title: The Wisconsin Organic Meat Initiative (2)

Project Beginning Date: July 1, 1998 Project End Date: June 1, 1999

Amount of Funding Awarded: \$18,800.00

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# **Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection**

## **Final Project Report**

### **The Wisconsin Organic Meat Initiative**

#### **1. Described the original intent of the grant project.**

This project was designed to create economic opportunity for family-scale livestock producers by developing a proprietary/value-added product line of organic meat.

At a time of falling commodity and livestock prices, this project intended to benefit Wisconsin producers by developing a profitable market. This would allow for additional farms to expand into livestock production in order to diversify their farm enterprises and stabilize farm income.

The scope of this project has remained the same since its inception.

#### **2. Describe the work conducted in this project.**

This year the initiative focused on developing value-added organic pork products. These include:

- Fresh Market
- Bone-in Loins
- Frozen Market
- Breakfast sausages
- Hot and Mild Italian sausages
- Bratwurst
- Bacon (smoked)
- Hams - Bone-in, boneless, smoked

Sales will be primarily through distributors, and a few larger retail accounts.

The complexity of this program necessitated:

- Creating uniform standards for farm production
- Training participating farmers
- Establishing processing standards
- Identifying, evaluating and choosing processing partners
- Organic certification of processing plants
- ISO 2000 certification for export to the EU
- Distributor/consumer market research
- Development of sales & promotional materials
- Development of production schedule

The ADD grant allowed us to access professional/technical expertise in the meat industry in order to rapidly enter the marketplace. Without this seed money, we could not have introduced the comprehensive product line that our farmers were capable of supporting.

Late this summer and fall, we will be introducing our complete market line on a national basis

The greatest challenges we faced were standardizing genetics and diet of the livestock, economically meeting the logistical demands of small producers who need to cooperate in order to meet a scale necessary for processing and identifying processing plants that were interested and well-suited for processing our products.

### **3. Described the public are reached efforts of this project.**

Through net working with other farm groups and accessing the media, we were able to amass a pool of farmers interested in organic meat production. After holding a number of informational meetings, these farmers were reduced in number, through self-selected membership in our Meat Pools. Additional outreach was done and numerous farmer meetings, conferences and shows.

Monthly meetings of all farmers participating in the Meat Pool were held. In addition, other educational events including farm tours were conducted.

The Wisconsin farm papers have featured, on a number of occasions, profiles of producers involved our meat program. Every time this occurs, the cooperative receives phone inquiries from other producers throughout Wisconsin. There have also been a number of articles written concerning organic meat and trade industry publications which has prominently featured the cooperative.

Market research was used to identify distributors and stores who were interested in carrying the organic meat products. Through public relations, advertising and speaking at a number of conferences frequented by the retailing sector, we have been able to develop a reputation for our initial involvement in the meat production sector of organic agriculture.

Please find enclosed a copy of some of our promotional materials.

### **4. Describe the results of this project**

This project successfully brought together family farmers to produce organic pork on a standardized basis. It then developed value-added products at selected manufacturing plants and is now in the process of distributing these products to the national marketplace. These results are consistent with our initial hopes and expectations.

These are the first nationally distributed organic meat products in the United States.

We will soon find out to, based on a real-time in a marketplace how large this market might become. Currently the annual revenue projections for the cooperative as a whole are approximately \$50 million. Organic meat has the potential to be as large or larger than our current business which is dominated by our dairy sector.

If the meat business realizes its market potential, there will be opportunities created for hundreds of additional family scale producers and this state.

### **5. How will the Wisconsin Agriculture industry be able to use the information from this project?**

The CROPP cooperative will continue to reach out to farmers interested in diversifying into organic livestock production. This outreach will take the forms by outlined above.

### **6. Include any research data that support your conclusions for this project.**

N/A

### **7. Include any other information you feel is appropriate.**

See enclosures

# **DRAFT - Pork Production Standards**

CROPP Cooperative/Organic Valley, April 22, 1999

## **Slaughter livestock**

- Only certified organic hogs will be acceptable.
- 100% certified organic feed from last third of gestation.
- No Genetically Modified Organisms or GMO derived feed, supplements, or additives.
- Pre-mix minerals and vitamins with potential GMO fillers are prohibited.
- Supplements must be organic when available.
- Prohibited:
  - Antibiotics, paraciticides, hormones, tail docking, farrowing crates.
- Access to outdoors mandatory after weaning (minimum two square feet per pig in outdoor area).
- Pasturing of hogs when seasonably appropriate is encouraged.
- Ear notching restricted, but not prohibited.
- Teeth clipping will be allowed.
- Castration is allowed and must be done within two weeks of birth unless pasture farrowed.
- Fish meal will be allowed (unless prohibited by certification organization) as long as the fish meal is not high intensity fish farm production with antibiotics and only in quantities that will not create an off- flavor.
- Rendered animal by-products prohibited.
- Producers are to have on hand a contingency plan for feed shortages.
- CROPP Feed coordinator is to be contacted when feed shortages are expected.
- No slatted or wire floors.
- Bare concrete not allowed in sleeping areas.
- Bedding must be 6 inches deep at a minimum and certifiable organic until September 1, 1999. Thereafter all bedding must be certified organic.

## **Breeding and Breeding Livestock Standards**

- Sows must remain in organic program to be rebred.
- No sow can be rotated back and forth from conventional to organic.
- Replacement and starting sows allowed from conventional sources, but must be fed 100% certified organic feed the last third of gestation.
- Paraciticides allowed prior to breeding for gilts or sows brought into organic program from off-farm sources if allowed by the certification organization.
- No farrowing crates.
- Sows must be farrowed in deep bedded farrowing pens with a minimum of 48 ft<sup>2</sup>.
- Pasture farrowing is allowed and encouraged.
- Piglets cannot be weaned before 6 weeks of age.